

January 9, 2015

Via E-Mail

The Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Honorable Members of the Board:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness Los Angeles County Council (NAMI LACC) is an association of the twelve Los Angeles County affiliates of NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and represents our collective county voice. NAMI LACC represents over 3,000 members that include persons living with serious mental illness and their families, friends, and supporters. NAMI LACC works closely with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health to improve systems that help persons find treatment, fight stigma and provide hope for families and persons with a mental illness.

NAMI LACC opposes Supervisor Antonovich's motion to consolidate the Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, and Health Services. Consolidating these agencies will make it more difficult to bring attention and funding to mental health issues. Mental health will not be the number one priority in a new agency.

Large health systems have not typically provided enough focus on mental health. When Department of Mental Health was part of Health Services in Los Angeles, mental health became the stepchild and was rarely consulted in decision-making. Additionally, services were focused in the "medical model." We have moved from that health services approach toward inclusive social and environmental approaches, which involve the family and client perspective, through the Department of Mental Health.

California attempted to consolidate the Department of Mental Health with Health Services -- *and years later* -- they continue to work out operations and policies. Consolidation in Los Angeles will create unnecessary confusion and obfuscation of mental health concerns. This move would potentially create operational issues that invariably decrease resources aimed at recovery and wellness for individuals living with mental illness. Progress on mental health issues via Department of Mental Health may be halted or postponed by consolidation.

Los Angeles County requires greater focus on mental health, not less. Burying mental health in a larger bureaucracy will reduce focus, not improve it. Therefore, it is critical that Department of Mental Health maintain direct accountability to and communication



with the Board of Supervisors.

We hope the Board of Supervisors considers our and other stakeholder input in this important decision.

Respectfully yours,

Brittney Weissman
Executive Director

cc: Marvin Southard, Director, Department of Mental Health